

PORT
ARTHUR

people

CHARLES O'HARA BOOTH MRS ELIZABETH
BOOTH WILLIAM THOMAS NAPIER CHAMP THE
REVEREND GEORGE EASTMAN DR THOMAS
COKE BROWNELL THOMAS JAMES LEMPRIÈRE
CHARLOTTE LEMPRIÈRE DENNIS COLLINS
MARK JEFFERY RICHARD PINCHES WILLIAM
YEOMANS WALTER PAISLEY WILLIAM PEARSON
WILLIAM BICKLE BENJAMIN STANTON

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CHARLES O'HARA BOOTH

1

COMMANDANT

Charles O'Hara Booth joined the British Army in 1815, three weeks after the Battle of Waterloo. He left England to join up in Calcutta, capital of Bengal in India.



He spent a short period in the 53rd Regiment before joining his new regiment, the 21st. Captain Booth came to Van Diemen's Land with this regiment, arriving in Hobart Town in early 1833. Within six weeks he had been appointed Commandant of Port Arthur, which was then the colony's major penal settlement. His high salary and very responsible position gave him entrée to Van Diemen's Land small, exclusive society, where he quickly became well-liked and respected.

At Port Arthur, Booth quickly made a name for himself as a careful administrator, an innovative planner and an energetic builder. In his eleven years there he invented and established a highly efficient semaphore system and had constructed Australia's first railway, from Norfolk Bay to Oakwood. He was regarded as severe but just in his treatment of convicts. However, he was also accused of being insensitive about individual problems in his zeal to treat all prisoners equally. As Commandant, he was also a magistrate and a justice of the peace.

His senior officers, and the military and civil and authorities in Hobart Town including Lieutenant-Governors Arthur and Franklin, held Booth in very high esteem. His plans for Point Puer particularly impressed Governor Franklin: Booth's idea was to separate very young prisoners from their older, more hardened fellows and to give the boys special attention and trade training, so that they could break the cycle of criminal behaviour.

CHARLES O'HARA BOOTH CONT.

1

Booth was a bachelor at Port Arthur for his first five years and frequently visited the homes of married officials, in particular Thomas Lemprière and his wife Charlotte. A visitor, James Ross, said that on first meeting Booth, 'he entertained us till a late hour with a great variety of interesting anecdotes . . . I am thoroughly convinced there is no man living better qualified for the important charge he has undertaken'. Some however did not like him; the medical officer in the mid 1830s, Cornelius Casey, found Booth high-handed and peremptory.

In 1838 Booth suffered a most serious setback when he became lost in the bush of Forestier Peninsula with a convict assistant, Joseph Turner. The pair lost their way in the central hills and became separated; Turner found his way to the house of a settler, Captain John Spotswood, who raised the alarm. Thomas Lemprière soon arrived from Port Arthur, having received the news by semaphore signal, and led the search party of soldiers, constables and settlers. By this time Booth was three days overdue and had spent three nights in cold wet autumn weather, weak with hunger and with only his dogs for company. Finally, after another night, one of the dogs, Sandy, spotted a searcher and took him to Booth, who was frostbitten and too weak to call out. He was taken by boat and railway back to Port Arthur but never fully recovered from the ordeal.

In November of the same year, Booth married Elizabeth Charlotte Eagle, stepdaughter of the surgeon in his regiment, Dr Edward Pilkington. She was nineteen, exactly half Booth's age, but they had known each other since she was a child. They were to have two daughters.

Booth's marriage and his mishap in the bush changed his career and his life. His health remained poor and his interest turned to family life, so his enthusiasm for the settlement diminished. He retired from the Army in 1840 and, although he remained at Port Arthur for another four years, he bought land in the North-East and applied for other government posts in preparation for an easier life. In 1844 he left the Peninsula to become Superintendent of the Queen's Orphan School at New Town where he remained until he died suddenly from a heart attack on 11 August 1851, aged 50.

MRS ELIZABETH BOOTH

2

WIFE OF COMMANDANT BOOTH

Elizabeth Charlotte 'Lizzy' Eagle was born in Dublin in 1819. On 20 November 1838, she married Charles O'Hara Booth at St David's Church, Hobart Town.



Elizabeth had come to Van Diemen's Land with her mother, step-father and family. Her step-father was Dr Pilkington, surgeon of Booth's regiment, the 21st Fusiliers.

Elizabeth was described by Thomas Lempriere as 'the most perfect beauty I have ever seen - voice rather rough'. Her later portrait by Lempriere shows a blue eyed, brown haired young woman.

During their time at Port Arthur the Booths made many journeys to Hobart Town and were frequent guests at social occasions there, including evenings at Government House with Sir John and Lady Franklin, with whom they were close friends. While at Port Arthur they had a daughter, Amelia Patricia, born on 25 August 1839. They remained there until ill-health forced Booth to take a position in Hobart Town in 1844.

The family moved to a comfortable house in New Town and in 1845 their second daughter, Charlotte Elizabeth, was born there.

Booth died in 1851 and Mrs Booth was left almost destitute. She decided to return to England and sailed with her daughters early in 1852. She unsuccessfully sought a widow's pension from the British Army, but was able to earn a living as matron at boys' schools and a girls' finishing school. Elizabeth died in 1903, aged 84.

WILLIAM THOMAS NAPIER CHAMP

3

COMMANDANT

William Thomas Napier Champ was born 15 April 1808 in Maldon Essex, England. In 1826 he joined the 63rd Regiment and it was with this regiment that he first came to Van Diemen's Land.



He had wanted to settle in Tasmania but was obliged to go to India with the rest of the regiment before he had received the official notification of his discharge. He returned to Tasmania in 1836 and held a number of positions in the Public Service. In 1837 he married Helen Abigail, the daughter of his neighbour.

Champ was the commandant of Port Arthur twice, between March 1844 and January 1846 and between November 1846 and June 1848. There were three children in the family when the Champs moved to Port Arthur and during their stay, another three were born. In total they were to have three sons and five daughters. The Champs were very keen gardeners and he often wrote to his mother in England for seeds and plants, particularly of wildflowers such as crab apples, blackberry and sloe. At Port Arthur he was a firm, just and humane Commandant but he clashed with Lieutenant Governor Denison when Denison criticised the Port Arthur system. Champ regarded this as a reflection on him personally.

In June 1848 the position of Commandant was abolished. The Assistant Superintendent at Saltwater River, George Courtenay took charge of the settlement as Superintendent and Champ was informed that he was to act only as Visiting Magistrate. Champ's salary was reduced and he lost some of his allowances but he continued to live at the Commandant's House. Champ felt his humiliation keenly and wrote a long letter of complaint about his treatment. He lobbied both the Lieutenant-Governor and the Secretary of State for a more suitable position.

By 1850 Champ had left Port Arthur and had moved to Rosny to take up the life of a gentleman farmer. In 1852 he was appointed Colonial Secretary, a position which became a political one with the introduction of responsible government in 1856. Between November 1856 and February 1857 he served as Tasmania's first premier. In 1892 Champ died in Melbourne.

REV GEORGE EASTMAN

4

CLERGYMAN

The Rev George Eastman was the chaplain at Port Arthur between 1855 and 1870. Before this he had been at the Female Factory at Ross for several years.

In 1845 Eastman had married Louisa McLeod and he had brought to Port Arthur his ever-increasing family. The couple were to have ten children. His older boys were said to be a nuisance about the settlement, often disrupting the smooth running of the farm and annoying the convicts in charge of the animals. Eastman himself was said to be 'much esteemed by the Members of his Communion and by his brother Officers for his kindly, genial and charitable disposal and was known as the Good Parson by the prisoners. When they got their ticket of leave he always gave them some money to help them on their way' (Scripps, 1997 Civilian and religious precinct, p.16).

In April 1870 Eastman was sick in bed with a cold when he was called to attend to a prisoner who was ill at an outstation. His cold developed into a chill and two days later he died at the age of 48. He was buried on the Isle of the Dead on 28 April 1870.

DR THOMAS COKE BROWNELL

5

MEDICAL OFFICER

Thomas Brownell was born on 16 December 1800 on the Caribbean island of St Christopher, the son of a Wesleyan missionary.

He was married in Yorkshire in 1826 and in 1829, with his wife Elizabeth and their two children, he left to seek a new life in the Australian colonies.

The family arrived in Hobart Town in April 1830. Brownell had intended to set up practice in Hobart Town but was offered and accepted the post of medical officer and catechist at Maria Island penal settlement, which then had been established for five years. With a salary of £50 a year, a comfortable home and an assigned servant, the family enjoyed their two years on the island. Brownell, an active Christian, was as much a religious instructor as a doctor, and when the family moved to Port Arthur in October 1832 he was the settlement's sole catechist. He was succeeded in this role by Rev. John Allen Manton, with whom he enjoyed a close friendship for many years; he even named one of his children after him.

In 1833 Brownell left Port Arthur, disappointed at the failure of his efforts to heal and reform the convicts. He found the prisoners generally degenerate, of 'a reprobate mind' and lost 'to everything good and decent'. His efforts to reform were met with little effect. Discipline at Port Arthur he felt, was severe 'bordering on cruelty' but 'just'. He obviously felt that strong methods were necessary to make an impression on these men.

For seven years Brownell, sometimes with the help of Elizabeth (a schoolteacher), tried his hand at private medical practice, farming at Brighton, and religious instruction and teaching at Bridgewater penal station and Avoca in the Fingal valley. In December 1840, the family, now with 11 children, found itself back at Port Arthur with Brownell as medical officer in charge.

DR THOMAS COKE BROWNELL CONT.

5

His 15 months there were very busy. Although he had three medical assistants, Brownell found the duties 'arduous and extensive' and took up another government post at George Town in 1843. The following year saw the family back on Maria Island, which had been reopened by the government as a penal settlement after closing in 1832. Then for five years until 1853 they were again in Hobart Town, where Brownell was a medical officer with the Immigration Department.

In December 1853, the family moved to Port Arthur for a third time and this time stayed for nearly five years. This period seems to have been happy and settled, but Brownell was plagued by a rheumatic condition and was forced to retire in 1857. He died in Hobart in 1871. Elizabeth survived him by four years.

THOMAS JAMES LEMPRIÈRE

6

COMMISSARIAT OFFICER

Thomas Lemprière was born on 11 January 1796 at Humbury, Germany, the son of Thomas Lemprière a British banker and merchant, and his wife Harriet.

He emigrated to Van Diemen's Land on the *Regalia* in 1822, aged 26. The following year, in Hobart Town, he married Charlotte Smith, and over the next twenty years they were to have twelve children.

Lemprière had served in the British army in France and the West Indies before emigrating, but he returned to the family business of trading in Hobart Town. His father and mother joined him in 1825 with two of his sisters, but their business failed soon afterwards. Lemprière then went to Maria Island as a storekeeper with the Commissariat Department in 1826, but stayed at the convict settlement only a short time before being promoted and sent to Macquarie Harbour. He lived there with his wife and family for five years until being posted as a clerk to Hobart Town in 1831.

In 1833 Lemprière and his family went to Port Arthur, and were to remain there for fifteen years. He was a senior clerk there until his promotion to Deputy Assistant Commissary General in 1837. He was again promoted to Assistant Commissary General in 1844, a position he held until leaving Port Arthur in 1848 to take up a similar position in Oatlands.

While at Port Arthur, Lemprière was a very busy man with many hobbies. He was a painter, painting these portraits of Captain and Mrs Booth and encouraging others to take up the brushes. He was also an amateur scientist; he was interested in natural history and set up a museum in the Commissariat Store. He also studied meteorology and kept careful records of weather and tides. His records are still used today by scientists who study global warming. He was a writer and edited the *Port Arthur Gazette* and later wrote 'The Penal Settlements of Van Diemen's Land' for the *Tasmanian Journal of Natural Science*.

THOMAS JAMES LEMPRIÈRE CONT.

6

He was also a diarist and he kept a regular record of his life at Port Arthur. He was fluent in French, spoke several other languages and played the horn and bugle. He also seems to have been a doting father and a man who loved parties and socialising.

Lemprière was recalled to England in 1849, and in 1850 was appointed Assistant Commissary General in Hong Kong. He became ill with dysentery while on a voyage back to England in 1852 and he died at sea. He was buried at Aden with military honours.

CHARLOTTE LEMPRIÈRE

7

WIFE OF THOMAS LEMPRIÈRE

Charlotte Smith was born in England in 1803. When she was still a child she and her three sisters moved with their parents to the West Indies, where her father was serving with the British Army.

During their time there, the family made the acquaintance of Thomas James Lemprière, an army adjutant about seven years older than Charlotte. Charlotte's father died in the West Indies and they returned to England. The family decided to emigrate to Van Diemen's Land and found Thomas Lemprière had taken the same ship, the *Regalia*.

On board, Charlotte and Thomas struck up a close friendship. Thomas, who was fluent in several languages, taught Charlotte French during the four month journey. By the time they reached Hobart Town in 1822, their relationship had blossomed and in May the following year they were married.

Charlotte and Thomas had twelve children over the next twenty-two years. The family moved first to Maria Island (1826) then to Macquarie Harbour (1827), then Hobart Town (1831) and finally to Port Arthur (1833) where they lived for fifteen years. Charlotte can not have had an easy life, constantly moving between remote prisons, far from the comforts to which she must have been used and managing a growing family with little domestic help. With only one servant, she must have been involved in household work like cooking and washing.

During their time at Port Arthur, the Lemprières became the centre of the settlement's free society. They were close friends of Captain Booth, who was a frequent visitor to their house and for whom Charlotte made up a book of pressed seaweeds in 1834 (Thomas drew a frontispiece for the book). Thomas himself was devoted to his wife; in his journal he writes of how he pined for her when she visited Hobart Town. He delighted in her company and that of their children.

CHARLOTTE LEMPRIÈRE CONT.

7

Captain LaPlace, a French mariner who had met the Lemprière family at Macquarie Harbour in 1831, visited Port Arthur in 1839 and again paid his respects to 'that charming family ... The mistress of the house,' he said 'looked quite as well and as young as she had in 1831, demonstrating that the best possible cosmetics for a woman's charms are tranquillity of mind, self-respect, the affection of those around her and the knowledge that she has fulfilled her duty.'

The family moved to Oatlands in 1848 but Thomas felt he needed to leave Van Diemen's Land temporarily to obtain promotion. Intending to return within a year or two, he took a posting in Hong Kong but contracted dysentery and died on his way back to England. The family had stayed behind in Van Diemen's Land and Charlotte was left with the care of four of her children (the remainder had already left home).

Charlotte stayed in Tasmania, living her last years with her daughter Fanny and Fanny's husband, Thomas Westbrook, at Bellerive. She died in 1890, aged eighty-seven.

CONVICT

Dennis Collins was born in Cork, southern Ireland, in 1775. As soon as he was old enough, he joined the Royal Navy and went to sea.

It was not long before he saw action; Britain was at war with France from the early 1790s until Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo in 1815. For much of this time the two countries were competing for supremacy of the sea, a struggle which Britain eventually won.

It was not without cost to Collins. His leg was badly injured during a battle at sea and it was later amputated. He sought and received a pension from the British Government but it was taken away without explanation some years later. He sought an explanation but received none. He went through all known channels to have his pension restored. A man with only one leg, especially during the post-Napoleonic depression in Britain, found it very difficult to get work. Collins could obtain no response and in 1832, in desperation, he petitioned the King, William IV. The King, however, turned down Collin's petition without any explanation.

Collin's desperation turned to anger. In July 1832 he went to the Ascot races, taking up a position as close to the Royal enclosure as a commoner could. When the King entered the enclosure and took his seat, Collins let fly with a stone, which hit the King on his hat and knocked it off.

Collins was arrested and charged with high treason for an assault on the King's person. He was found guilty, and sentenced to be hanged, then drawn (or disembowelled), then beheaded and quartered (the body cut into pieces). The bloody sentence was commuted to transportation for life and on 12 August Collins landed at Hobart Town aboard the *Emperor Alexander*, a sullen and angry man.

DENNIS COLLINS CONT.

8

On arrival he was transferred directly to Port Arthur, a treatment reserved for prisoners considered particularly difficult or guilty of an especially serious crime. He had only two offences recorded against his name in Van Diemen's Land, both at Port Arthur. On 3 and 11 October 1833, he refused orders to go to work. He was placed in solitary confinement for seven days on each charge. But by now he was beyond the reach of the law.

Collins had refused to eat since soon after he arrived in the Colony. No-one could either persuade or force him to eat, and by mid October he was very weak. He was put into the hospital at Port Arthur but became unconscious and died on 1 November, 1833.

CONVICT

Mark Jeffery was born in Cambridge, England, in 1825. His father was a gardener and a violent drunkard; Mark ran away from home when he was 15 and lived on his wits until he took up burglary.



He was a giant of a man, known for his terrible temper and violent rages. He was first sentenced to transportation for 15 years for burglary, but while he was waiting on the hulk to be transported he assaulted a man and was sentenced to transportation for life. He was first sent to Norfolk Island in April 1850 where he suffered dreadful punishment under the tyrannical rule of Commandant John Price. When that settlement was broken up in 1852 he was transferred to Port Arthur, where he seemed to settle down somewhat. After his release in 1855 he lasted a year before he was back at Port Arthur, to serve 27 months for assault. Released in 1859 with a ticket of leave, he was constantly in trouble thereafter, with 19 convictions for assault and abusive language. He spent many periods back at Port Arthur, including long spells in the Separate Prison. He had been severely injured by working for long periods in heavy chains; he was not a well man, and he was a very angry man. When provoked, he would lash out at anyone with his two walking sticks.

In 1872 he received his second life sentence, this time for manslaughter committed while he was drunk, and he was returned to Port Arthur yet again. He resumed his career of aggressive and abusive behaviour and over the next four years he notched up 24 charges. He was sent to the Isle of the Dead as gravedigger, to separate him from the other prisoners. He liked it there; he could bake his own bread, make mats and brooms and keep out of trouble. But one night he had a bad dream, which he said was a visit from Satan, and he demanded to be returned to the settlement.

Mark Jeffrey eventually died in the Pauper's Depot in Launceston in 1903, aged 78. He had spent most of his life in prison. An account of his life, titled *A Burglar's Life* claims to be autobiographical, but is unlikely; it is however a rare insider's view of the convict system.

CONVICT

Richard Pinches a.k.a Henry Singleton was a 27 year old plumber and glazier when he was transported. He was a single Roman Catholic from Birmingham who could read and write.



Pinches had made a habit out of minor crime; he had four previous convictions for stealing and housebreaking and had served short sentences. Finally the court decided that it had seen enough of him, and he was transported for 14 years for stealing linen. He arrived in mid 1851.

He was first sent to Norfolk Island and in a year he served nine and a half months hard labour in chains for being disobedient, dirty, disorderly and having money improperly in his possession.

Transferred to Port Arthur in early 1853, Pinches continued his campaign of disobedience, earning himself more time in solitary and hard labour in chains. In May 1854 he gained a pass but it seemed that he still had not developed a taste for work; three months later he absconded from his master. He was caught after some weeks and returned to Port Arthur for 18 months hard labour. This was not to his liking and two months later he bolted; he was recaptured and after serving 12 months he was again assigned to a master.

This time Pinches completed his sentence without incident. His next appearance was in Oatlands Goal under a new name, Henry Singleton, but he was still up to his old tricks. He was sentenced to four years at Port Arthur for stealing five pigs. There he got another three months hard labour for being drunk. In early 1864 Richard gained his freedom but only seven months later he was back in goal in Hobart, charged with bigamy. Marriage records cannot even verify that he was married once. He was acquitted, so the charge against him may have been fabricated.

RICHARD PINCHES CONT.

10

He kept out of trouble until 1870, when he was returned to Port Arthur for five years for breaking and entering an outbuilding and stealing. He must have misbehaved at Port Arthur because four years later he was in the Separate Prison, although his offence was not recorded. Then he received another three years with hard labour, including a year in the Separate Prison, for attempting to escape.

In July 1875 and again in 1879 he was in the Prisoners' Barracks, but we do not know why. 1883 was a bad year for Richard. He was arrested twice, once in February when he was sentenced to three months hard labour for larceny and then in November he received 14 years for burglary. We have no further records for Richard.

He was then 65 years old and had spent almost half his life in the convict system.

CONVICT

William Yeomans probably spent more time at Port Arthur than any other person, convict or free, during its years as a penal settlement.



Yeomans was a twenty-year old shoemaker when in 1829 he was transported for seven years for stealing lead. He had only one previous conviction. He arrived in Van Diemen's Land early in 1830 on the transport *Bussorah Merchant*.

From the day of his arrival Yeomans seems to have been in trouble. When he was not in a chain gang he was employed in his original trade, shoemaking, and frequently was charged with stealing leather or shoes. He finally was sent to Port Arthur in April 1833 for hiding leather and remained there at least until 1837. He was freed in October 1839.

Yeomans did not long escape the attention of the law. Another stealing offence caused his removal to Port Arthur in 1840, where his record of theft, insubordination and absconding was judged to be so bad that in 1844 he was sent to the 'hell on earth', Norfolk Island. He was still in custody when Norfolk Island closed down in 1855 and he, along with other 'incurables', was returned to Port Arthur.

Free again in 1856, in a drunken rage Yeomans used his shoemaker's knife to stab the woman he was planning to marry, after accusing her of drinking. The woman, Jane Ross, survived and gave evidence against Yeomans in 1857, when he was sentenced to death. But again he found himself back at Port Arthur, after his sentence was commuted to life imprisonment.

Yeomans remained at Port Arthur for another twenty years, mainly as a result of his increasingly violent temperament; by now he had a long record of violent behaviour. He was often an inmate of the Separate Prison, and once threatened the Prison's head keeper. When Yeomans left the settlement with other prisoners in 1877, aged 67, he had endured every form of punishment ever inflicted at Port Arthur, including a total of 470 lashes. On leaving Port Arthur, he was held in Campbell Street Gaol, where he probably stayed until he died.

BOY CONVICT

Walter Paisley was 13 years old when he was tried in Buckinghamshire, for breaking into a house.

His brother, and four supposed friends, had lowered the little boy through a window – a year and a half later Paisley’s height was recorded as 1.25 metres. When the burglary went wrong, his accomplices ran off, abandoning Paisley. He was sentenced to seven years transportation.

Shipped on the *Isabella* in 1833, Paisley was one of sixty-eight boys sent to the new juvenile establishment at Point Puer. The experience would not be pleasant. Over the next five years, 44 charges were entered against his name in the black books held in the Superintendent of Convicts’ office in Hobart.

Many of these charges resulted in sentences to solitary confinement, a punishment with which Paisley was to become all too familiar. On average he spent two and a half days of every month at Point Puer locked up in the dark on a diet of bread and water. Some convicts hated solitary more than a flogging, itself a humiliating and degrading punishment. The prisoner John Mortlock succinctly summed up its effects, ‘of course, the brain is the seat of all pain, very dreadful’.

Paisley’s first experience of solitary came just 27 days after the settlement opened. He was ordered to the cells for a week for insubordinate conduct towards Superintendent Montgomery. Five months later some of his friends were sentenced to solitary and Paisley amused them by sitting outside their cells and reciting obscene stories. For this he was locked up for a week. On another occasion he was punished for attempting to smuggle tobacco to a friend confined in the cells. When Paisley himself was locked up he refused to be quiet, singing, blaspheming and shouting obscenities.

As time went on Paisley’s conduct became increasingly violent. He destroyed his work in the carpenter’s shop, struck a fellow boy with a spade, punched the schoolmaster and threatened others with a stolen lancet. After he was caught with a chicken which he had stolen from the Superintendent’s garden, he attacked one of the boys who had provided evidence against him.

WALTER PAISLEY CONT.

12

He was released from Point Puer shortly before his sentence of transportation expired and he arrived in Launceston on Christmas Day 1838. Thereafter he managed to stay clear of trouble until the following year when he was arrested with a man named Thomas Dickenson and put on trial for burglary. For robbing the house of Felix Murphy in Liverpool Street he was sentenced to transportation for life. His sentence included the recommendation that he should be sent to Port Arthur for four years where, as a 'bad character', he was to be strictly watched.

Back at Port Arthur he was up before the Commandant on another six occasions mostly for misconduct and disobedience of orders. He was discharged to the Colonial Hospital in Hobart in April 1844 and thereafter sent to the invalid station at Impression Bay.

Judging from his official record, Walter Paisley's life was a failure. He appears to have been an archetypal Dickensian street thief who at first refused to bow to authority, but in the end was broken and ground into the dust of the penal landscape - one more broken, pathetic life. This version of Paisley's life, however, is taken from the State record. Paisley did not care much for books; while at Point Puer he was punished for ripping apart his catechism. Let us follow his example and place the written account to one side.

In November 1998 there was a display of vintage boats at the Wooden Boat Festival in Hobart. The oldest boat there, the one which took pride of place in the display, was built in 1871 by fifty-two year old Walter Paisley. Surely Paisley's real story lies in his handcrafted dinghy and the carpentry skills he chose to acquire at Point Puer in between the shouts and obscenities, the threats, the violent strokes on his buttocks and back and the two hundred days he spent locked up in the dark (Maxwell-Stewart and Hood, 2001, p, 10).

BOY CONVICT

William Pearson was barely 12 when he was sentenced to seven years transportation at Hertford Quarter Sessions for stealing razors.

He was no stranger to the courts; he had already been sentenced to seven years transportation when he was only 10, but after 16 months in prison he managed to escape.

Pearson claimed to have been before the courts on about 30 different occasions. He confessed to having been arrested for running away from home; vagrancy; shop breaking; stealing money, eggs, bread, knives, a gun, rabbits, fowls, clothes and jewellery. This time there was no escape and he was transported to Van Diemen's Land on the *Francis Charlotte*, in 1837.

On arrival in Hobart he was sent to the boys' prison at Point Puer (Puer means boy in Latin) at Port Arthur. The Commissariat Officer at Port Arthur, Thomas Lemprière, was highly critical of the rigid system of discipline at Point Puer. He thought it was unfair that the young inmates were severely punished for every trivial breach of the rules and regulations. All of these sentences were entered in the convict administrator's central register of offences, giving the boy an extensive criminal record.

Pearson was charged on no fewer than 94 occasions while on the Tasman Peninsula. Offences for which he was punished included talking at muster, tearing his blanket and having buttons in his possession. In June 1845 he was tried in the Supreme Court in Hobart, for stabbing Joseph Bennett with intent to do grievous bodily harm. He was found guilty and sentenced to death, although this was commuted to life transportation beyond the seas. The Colonial Secretary instructed that the first seven years of his sentence should be served on Norfolk Island.

WILLIAM PEARSON CONT.

13

Norfolk Island was the most feared of the Australian penal settlements. On 1 July 1846 the ex-Port Arthur convict, William Westwood burst out of the Prison Barracks shouting 'Follow me and you follow to the gallows'. About 50 men took up the call, bludgeoning three constables to death as they rampaged through the settlement. William Pearson was one of the 14 ringleaders tried and sentenced to death at a hastily convened court. mutineers were executed and dumped in a mass grave. At the time of his death, William Pearson was 22 years old (Maxwell-Stewart and Hood, 2001, p.59).

BOY CONVICT

William Bickle was 11 years old when he was charged at Devon Assizes with stealing a watch, and sentenced to seven years transportation.

He was described by the surgeon as being troublesome and mischievous on the voyage to Van Diemen's Land. When he landed from the transport *Asia* in Hobart, Bickle was 1.25 metres tall, with light brown hair and hazel eyes.

Bickle was sent to Point Puer across the bay from Port Arthur, where discipline was strict. Most inmates at Point Puer were hauled into the Superintendent's office at some point during their stay. In just under five years, however Bickle was charged on no fewer than 65 occasions, accumulating nearly 300 stripes on his buttocks and back and serving 172 days in solitary confinement. Punishments included a week in solitary for disobedience of orders and swearing, four days in the cells for being caught on the rocks at the back of the settlement, three days in the cells for talking at muster and 15 stripes on the breech for destroying his cap. Also his sentence was extended for two years for insubordination and being illegally at large.

In June 1841 Bickle was released from Point Puer and sent to Launceston for assignment. At first he was placed in the service of a Mr Thomas, but was soon charged with insubordination, punished with 50 lashes and returned to the service of the Crown. He worked for a while on public works in Launceston until he was charged with disorderly conduct and swearing. He was sentenced to the tread wheel for a month, but afterwards was charged almost straight away with 'gross disorderly conduct'; his sentence was changed to 12 months hard labour in chains at Port Arthur. He arrived back at the settlement on 30 May 1843 but was released almost two months later after becoming free by servitude (Maxwell-Stewart and Hood, 2001, p.84).

BOY CONVICT

Benjamin Stanton was 15 years old when he was sentenced to seven years transportation for stealing a coat.

He arrived in Van Diemen's Land in November 1833, along with many other juvenile convicts on board the transport *Isabella*. Stanton was sent to the Prison Barracks to await assignment. While settlers took many of the older boys who had served apprenticeships, younger less skilled lads like Stanton were left in the Barracks. Stanton therefore was sent to Point Puer.

During four and a half years at the settlement, Stanton was brought before the Commandant on 20 separate occasions. Charges ranged from absenting himself for several hours and remaining absent until apprehended by the military, for which he was punished with a week in solitary confinement, to playing on the Sabbath, which earned him three days in solitary.

In 1838 Stanton was sent to Hobart for assignment, only to be returned to Point Puer the following year after he was found in the possession of some clothes for which he could not account. After another year on the Tasman Peninsula he was sent to Hobart again. In 1841, shortly after he had received his certificate of freedom, he was sentenced in the Hobart Quarter Sessions to seven years transportation for stealing a spyglass valued at 30 shillings. He served another three years at Port Arthur before being sent back to Hobart for assignment. In 1845 he absconded from his master and boarded the brigantine *Abeona* bound for South Australia. He was discovered and returned to Port Arthur to serve 12 months hard labour. In 1846, when he was 29, he was pardoned by the Lieutenant-Governor and thereafter he disappears from the official record (Maxwell-Stewart and Hood, 2001, p.33).